

# **The Identification and role of the Management of Risk in the Course Accreditation Procedures of Australian Universities**

**Richard Audley**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Technology Sydney**

## Statement of Originality

I, Richard Maxwell Audley, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Business at the University of Technology, Sydney.

The thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research has been supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Production Note:

Signature..... Signature removed prior to publication.

Date .....31 January 2020.....

## Acknowledgements

There are three groups to whom I am forever indebted for the conduct of this research.

The first, of course, must be my family whose constant tolerance and sacrifice has made this work possible. I appreciate all that they have had to put up with over a long and trying period.

It is impossible to fully acknowledge the support provided by my supervisors during the conduct of this research. I came to this task as a mature age student after a lifetime in Higher Education, with a mind of my own that was often unwilling to conform, and I was never been the easiest of students to supervise. My constant changing from one thing to another would have been enough to drive a saint to drink, and I cannot thank them enough for their kindness, patience and support over a very long journey.

The third group are my colleagues in the Higher Education Industry, most of whom must remain anonymous. It is never easy to investigate the inner workings of Australian universities, and these people, who I regard as colleagues rather than informants, opened many doors that might otherwise have remained closed. I appreciate all that they have done, and I hope that this work will be of assistance in the conduct of their work.

Lastly, I acknowledge the contribution of all who have worked behind the scenes to make this document possible. No one can work on their own, and no one can think his work complete until it has survived the admonition of his peers. I really appreciate all who have made a comment on this work. I might not have felt so at the time, but at the end of the day I must acknowledge that their collective wisdom is far superior to mine.

Dick Audley

# Abstract

Australian universities have the right to accredit the programs of study leading to their awards. Each institution has developed its own procedures for assessing the rigour, relevance and viability of course and subject proposals. A common factor across the sector is the identification and management of risk. The research focuses on how risk has had an impact upon the course approval procedures of Australian universities.

The research was conducted in two parts. The first consisted of an analysis of the material provided by Australian universities explaining their course accreditation and risk management procedures. This analysis disclosed a series of gaps, which were filled in the second stage by the interview of relevant staff. Both sets of information were then used to establish a relationship between risk management and course accreditation procedures in Australian higher education.

It was found that there are two categories of risk in Australian universities – internal and external. The first is countered by prudent management and the second through contingency plans. It was also found that as the majority of those involved with the approval of courses have little training in risk management, risk is controlled by universities through a diligent adherence to procedures.

## Table of Contents

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY .....	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	II
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	IV
LIST OF FIGURES .....	XII
GLOSSARY .....	XIII
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW .....	1
<b>1.1 Background.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1.1 The scope of the research.....	1
1.1.2 The need to consider risk .....	2
1.1.3 Risk management as a unifying factor in university operations.....	2
<b>1.2 Context of the study.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.3 The research problem .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.4 Motivation for the research .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.5 The Conduct of the Research.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.5.1 The structure of the thesis .....	5
<b>1.6 The Justification for the research.....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.6.1 Lack of knowledge about course accreditation procedures across the sector.....	8
1.6.2 Regulatory Pressures on a clarification of procedures .....	8
1.6.3 The investigation of administrative procedures within Australian universities.....	8
<b>1.7 Conceptual framework.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.8 Limitations and Restrictions.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.9 Contribution to Knowledge .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.10 The Researcher's Background .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.11 Summary .....</b>	<b>13</b>
CHAPTER 2 COURSE ACCREDITATION IN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES.....	14
<b>2.1. Boundaries .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2.2 Course Accreditation as an aspect of Higher Education Management.....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.2.1 The authority given to universities by virtue of their enabling legislation.....	14
2.2.2 Subsequent legislation impacting on this authority.....	14
2.2.3 Internal and external quality measures relating to universities .....	15
<b>2.3 The intent of Australian Higher Education Providers and Regulators.....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.3.1 The Intent of Universities .....	16
2.3.2 The Intent of Regulators .....	18

2.3.3 The Intent of Third Parties .....	19
2.3.4 Course Accreditation as an arena .....	20
<b>2.4 The role of University Governance .....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.4.1 The governance structure of Australian Universities .....	20
2.4.2 The concept of <i>shared governance</i> In Australian universities .....	21
2.4.3 The relationship between shared governance, risk management, and course accreditation .....	22
2.4.4 The tasks delegated to Academic Boards.....	22
2.4.5 Responsibility for the completion of these tasks .....	25
2.4.6 Risk management in the context of Higher Education governance.....	26
<b>2.5 Course Accreditation as an Exercise in Governance and Risk Management.....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.5.1 What the universities claim to be seeking from course accreditation .....	27
2.5.2 Overview of the governance of course accreditation in Australian universities .....	29
<b>2.6 The role of Course Accreditation Committees .....</b>	<b>32</b>
2.6.1 The responsibilities of accreditation committees .....	32
2.6.2 The composition of accreditation committees .....	32
2.6.3 Support for accreditation committees .....	32
2.6.4 Course Accreditation Committees and risk management .....	33
<b>2.7 Course Accreditation as an Instrument of Power and Control .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2.8 Summary .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 RISK MANAGEMENT THEORY.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3.1 Risk Management Concepts .....</b>	<b>36</b>
3.1.1 Definitions of risk in general .....	37
3.1.1.1 Risk within not-for-profit organisations .....	38
3.1.1.2 Risk within society.....	38
3.1.1.3 Risk within the academy .....	39
3.1.2 Conditions for Risk to Exist.....	40
3.1.3 Causes of Risk .....	42
3.1.3.1 Perceived causes .....	42
3.1.3.2 Ascribed causes.....	43
3.1.3.3 Actual causes.....	43
3.1.4 The Recognition of Risk.....	44
3.1.4.1 Risk Intelligence .....	44
3.1.4.2 Risk Sensitivity .....	45
3.1.4.3 Conscious recognition.....	45
3.1.4.4 Unconscious recognition.....	46
3.1.4.5 The danger of pseudo-risk.....	47
3.1.4.6 Risk mitigation and avoidance .....	47
<b>3.2 The Literature on Risk Management.....</b>	<b>47</b>
3.2.1 Ruzic-Dimitrijevic & Dakic (2014) - Risk as a necessity for improvement .....	48
3.2.2 Raanan (2008) - Risk as an indicator of entrepreneurship .....	49
3.2.3 Pedro-Neves (2014) - Risk as a validator of institutional integrity .....	50
3.2.4 Arrif et al. (2014) - Risk as a unifier through shared responsibility .....	51
3.2.5 Lundquist (2015) - Enterprise risk management in Higher Education .....	51
<b>3.3 Types of Risk.....</b>	<b>52</b>
3.3.1 Risk Identification and Anticipation .....	52
3.3.2 Preventable and avoidable risks .....	53
3.3.3 Unforeseeable Risk, and Contingency Planning .....	54
3.3.4 Risk Mitigation .....	54
3.3.5 Regulatory Risk .....	54
3.3.6 Institutional compliance risk.....	55
3.3.7 Social and Political Risk .....	56
3.3.8 Other Risks .....	57

<b>3.4 The Appreciation of Risk Management.....</b>	<b>58</b>
3.4.1 Risk identification and anticipation .....	58
3.4.2 Preventable and Avoidable Risks .....	58
3.4.3 Unforeseeable Risk, Insurance and Contingency Planning.....	58
3.4.4 Risk Mitigation .....	60
3.4.5 Regulatory risk.....	61
3.4.6 Institutional and/or managerial risk .....	62
3.4.7 Social and political risk.....	62
3.4.8 Other risks (including financial risk) .....	63
<b>3.5 The human element in higher education risk management .....</b>	<b>64</b>
3.5.1 Risk as a Human Perception .....	64
3.5.2 Risk versus caution in universities .....	65
3.5.3 Factors encouraging or discouraging risk .....	65
3.5.4 Learning from past experience of risk .....	66
3.5.5 The shield of anonymity in Higher Education risk management .....	67
<b>3.6 Pseudo-risks and phantoms .....</b>	<b>67</b>
3.6.1 Risk as a stick to frighten people .....	67
3.6.2 Risk as a means for gaining institutional unity .....	68
3.6.3 Risk as a means for achieving corporate aims .....	68
3.6.4 Fear management versus risk management.....	68
3.6.5 Examples of historic fears that proved unrealistic .....	68
<b>3.7 The psychology of risk.....</b>	<b>69</b>
3.7.1 Risk as a value judgment .....	69
3.7.2 Errors in making judgments.....	69
3.7.3 Higher Education as an exercise in risk stewardship .....	70
3.7.4 Risk Stewardship as a legacy.....	70
<b>3.8 Summary .....</b>	<b>70</b>
 CHAPTER 4 THE IMPLICATIONS OF RISK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION .....	 72
<b>4.1 The Concept of Risk in Australian Higher Education.....</b>	<b>72</b>
4.1.1 Sensitivities in Australian higher education.....	72
4.1.2 Risk Awareness in Australian higher education .....	73
4.1.3 Responsibility for risk assessment .....	73
<b>4.2 The implications of risk for Australian higher education operations.....</b>	<b>74</b>
4.2.1 What constitutes a higher education operation?.....	74
4.2.2 Strategies for assessing risk in university operations .....	74
4.2.3 Internal and external risk assessment .....	75
<b>4.3 External risk assessors in Australian higher education.....</b>	<b>76</b>
4.3.1 Higher education standards panel .....	76
4.3.2 TEQSA risk assessment framework.....	76
4.3.2.1 Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) Domain 5.....	76
4.3.2.2 HESF Domain 6: (Governance and Accountability) .....	76
4.3.2.3 – Other external assessors .....	77
<b>4.4 Examples of risk management as an aspect of Australian higher education governance.....</b>	<b>77</b>
4.4.1 Risk management at the University of Adelaide .....	77
4.4.2 Risk management at the University of Southern Queensland .....	78
4.4.3 Risk management at the Australian Catholic University.....	78
4.4.4 Risk management at The University of Notre Dame Australia .....	79
<b>4.5 Approaches to risk management by Australian Universities.....</b>	<b>79</b>
4.5.1 Risk management as protection for the institution (James Cook University).....	79
4.5.2 Risk management as a means for minimizing disruption and ensuring business continuity (Southern Cross University) .....	80

4.5.3 Risk management for the welfare of staff and students (University of Adelaide).....	80
4.5.4 Risk management as an instrument for the maintenance of standards and values (University of Queensland) .....	81
4.5.5 Risk Management as a means for learning and improvement (University of Melbourne).....	82
4.5.6 Risk Management as a multi-stage system of defence .....	83
<b>4.6 Summary .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>5.1 Methodological considerations .....</b>	<b>85</b>
5.1.1 The Conduct of research into Australian universities .....	85
5.1.2 Procedural courtesies and the collection of data .....	88
5.1.3 Sources of information on Australian universities .....	89
5.1.3.1 University produced material .....	89
5.1.1.4 Non-University produced material.....	90
<b>5.2 Comments on the methodological approach .....</b>	<b>90</b>
5.2.1 Brief summary of the methodology .....	90
5.2.2 Implementation of this procedure .....	90
5.2.2.1 Collection and sorting of material .....	90
5.2.2.2 Development of a portfolio for each institution .....	91
5.2.2.3 Development of a standardised data collection method .....	91
5.2.2.4 Development of a protocol for the conduct of research into universities .....	91
5.2.2.5 Application of the Methodology .....	91
<b>5.3 Summary .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6 THE DATA DERIVED FROM DOCUMENTATION AND INTERVIEWS.....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>6.1 Why focus on documents?.....</b>	<b>93</b>
6.1.1 The nature and status of official documentation .....	93
6.1.1.1 Legal status .....	95
6.1.1.2 Compliance status .....	95
6.1.1.3 Moral status.....	96
<b>6.2 The use of documentary evidence to shape other sources of information.....</b>	<b>96</b>
6.2.1 Gap analysis.....	96
6.2.2 Sources of additional information.....	97
<b>6.3 The course accreditation and risk management procedures published by universities.....</b>	<b>97</b>
6.3.1 The nature of this material .....	97
6.3.2 The purpose of this material .....	98
6.3.3 Is course accreditation seen as an academic or as an administrative activity by particular institutions? .....	98
<b>6.4 The use of documentary material in the research.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>6.5 Interviews .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>6.6 Summary .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7 FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>7.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>103</b>
7.1.1 Published documentation as a clear explanation of procedure.....	104
7.1.2 The diversity of terminology between institutions .....	104
7.1.3 The focus of documents in the light of interviews .....	105
7.1.4 Staff use of course accreditation documentation.....	106
7.1.5 The interpretation of procedures .....	107



7.1.6 The relationship between procedure and policy .....	109
7.1.7 Staff influence on procedures.....	110
7.1.8 The power of those servicing committees.....	110
7.1.9 The role of TEQSA .....	114
<b>7.2 The feedback from specific groups of informants.....</b>	<b>115</b>
7.2.1 Academic informants.....	115
7.2.2 Administrative informants .....	116
7.2.3 Professional Support informants.....	117
7.2.4 Managerial informants.....	118
7.2.5 Executive informants .....	119
<b>7.3 Reasons for departure from established norms .....</b>	<b>120</b>
7.3.1 What are established norms? .....	120
7.3.2 Time pressures .....	120
7.3.3 The need to remain competitive.....	121
7.3.4 Disruption caused by inexperience .....	121
7.3.5 Special programs .....	122
7.3.6 Other reasons .....	122
<b>7.4 The influence of external bodies on the accreditation process .....</b>	<b>123</b>
7.4.1 External Regulators.....	123
7.4.2 Compliance with statutory authorities .....	124
7.4.3 Benefactors and philanthropic organisations .....	125
7.4.4 Community expectations .....	125
7.4.5 Peer pressure.....	126
<b>7.5 University governance, course accreditation and risk management .....</b>	<b>126</b>
7.5.1 What is meant by university governance?.....	126
7.5.2 Informants' views on the governance structure within which they work.....	127
7.5.3 The impact of governance structures on accreditation procedures and risk management.....	128
7.5.4 The impact of local autonomy on risk management .....	129
<b>7.6 Risk Management in Course Accreditation.....</b>	<b>129</b>
7.6.1 The responsibility of staff for risk management .....	129
7.6.2 Types of Risk.....	130
7.6.3 Testing this information against published accreditation procedures .....	134
7.6.4 The views of informants on other players.....	138
<b>7.7 The relationship between risk management and administrative procedures .....</b>	<b>138</b>
7.7.1 The role of university staff in risk intervention.....	138
7.7.2 Administrative approaches to risk management.....	139
7.7.3 Risk awareness and risk aversion in administrative systems.....	139
7.7.4 The responsibility of staff .....	139
7.7.5 The responsibility of others.....	140
<b>7.8 The Impact of Grace Crickette on Administrative Risk Management in Australian Universities .....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>7.9 Summary .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8 REVIEW AND REFINEMENT OF DATA .....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>8.1 Documentary Material.....</b>	<b>143</b>
8.1.1. Institutional policies and procedures.....	143
8.1.2 Amendments and additions to the documentary material gained from interview .....	143
8.1.3 Cases where published documents could be misleading.....	145
8.1.4 Cases where published documents were obsolete.....	145
<b>8.2 The relationship between published documents and the reality perceived by informants.....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>8.3 Broad overview of the findings.....</b>	<b>148</b>

8.3.1 Oversight of procedures by management .....	149
8.3.2 Oversight by Academic Board .....	150
8.3.3 Influence of accreditation practice on institutional curricula .....	152
8.3.4 Other influences on the accreditation process .....	153
<b>8.4 Risk Management in Course Accreditation.....</b>	<b>154</b>
8.4.1 What are the risks that universities face? .....	155
8.4.2 How are these risks addressed? .....	155
8.4.3 Concerns raised by particular groups or individuals (not included above) .....	157
8.4.4 Other risks identified during the research .....	157
8.4.5 Contingency planning and risk avoidance.....	159
8.4.6 Risk appetite in Australian universities.....	161
8.4.7 Risk Maturity in Australian Universities.....	163
8.4.8 Risk management and course accreditation in the light of Institutional risk appetite and risk maturity .....	166
<b>8.5 Anomalies and unresolved issues regarding risk and course accreditation.....</b>	<b>168</b>
8.5.1 Offshore teaching, and teaching in languages other than English.....	168
8.5.2 Teaching through offshore agents.....	169
8.5.3 The approval of online and other non-traditional modes of teaching.....	169
8.5.4 Variation in protocol for special cases - a search for the core or canon of the accreditation process....	170
8.5.5 The appointment of, and role in the accreditation process, of course coordinators and other staff.....	171
8.5.6 The process after a course is approved.....	172
<b>8.6 The role of risk managers in the course accreditation process .....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>8.7 Articulation from other providers.....</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>8.8 The university as an examining rather than a teaching body .....</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>8.9 The cost of course accreditation .....</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>8.10 Incompatible systems, such as course accreditation, as a means for preventing consolidation and outsourcing.....</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>8.11 Forced changes in accreditation procedures .....</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>8.12 Summary .....</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>CHAPTER 9 DISCUSSION OF REFINED DATA.....</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>9.1 An Initial Discussion of the Findings .....</b>	<b>183</b>
9.1.1 Restatement of the problem .....	183
9.1.2 The environmental background .....	184
9.1.3 Undertaking the research .....	185
<b>9.2 The issues to be determined .....</b>	<b>186</b>
9.2.1 How and why do Australian universities assess courses? .....	187
<b>9.3 Why do universities accredit courses? .....</b>	<b>188</b>
9.3.1 Furthering the strategic aims of the institution.....	188
9.3.2 Ensuring the availability and best use of resources.....	188
9.3.3 Ensuring the financial viability of proposals.....	189
9.3.4 Identifying and managing potential risks.....	190
9.3.5 Ensuring compatibility with equivalent programs elsewhere.....	190
9.3.6 Communicating future intentions and avoiding territorial disputes .....	191
9.3.7 Collecting administrative data, including records .....	192
9.3.8 Satisfying the requirements of external regulators .....	193
9.3.9 Maintaining the confidence of the public and stakeholders .....	193
<b>9.4 How are courses assessed by Australian universities? .....</b>	<b>194</b>

9.4.1 By comparing proposals to similar offerings elsewhere.....	194
9.4.2 By determining the needs of students and the community against the ability of the institution to satisfy these needs .....	194
9.4.3 By an analysis of commercial viability, thus ensuring the effective use of money .....	195
9.4.4 By seeking the views of relevant stakeholders within and outside the university .....	196
9.4.5 By ensuring compliance with external and internal requirements.....	196
9.4.6 By examining the expected outcome against the strategic aims of the institution.....	198
9.4.7 By assessing the innovative nature of each proposal .....	198
9.4.8 By confirming the benefits to students and staff (including the potential for research) .....	198
<b>9.5 Who is engaged in this assessment? .....</b>	<b>198</b>
9.5.1 Senior officers of the university.....	198
9.5.2 Experts in the discipline area .....	199
9.5.3 Those directly involved with the development and delivery of the program .....	199
9.5.4 Representatives of the academic community (but not necessarily experts in the discipline area).....	199
9.5.5 Relevant administrative and professional staff .....	200
9.5.6 Committees or teams containing elements from all of the above.....	200
9.5.7 What are these people (or office holders) seeking to achieve from the process? .....	202
9.5.8 Is course accreditation essentially an academic, a student welfare, or an administrative activity? .....	204
9.5.9 What role, if any, does, or should, risk management play in course accreditation? .....	207
9.5.10 Who (if anyone) is responsible for the risks arising from new courses or subjects? .....	210
9.5.11 What (if any) are the risks to which universities are exposed? .....	215
9.5.12 The withdrawal of approval .....	221
<b>9.6 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>CHAPTER 10 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>10.1 Justification for this Conclusion .....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>10.2 The Conceptual Framework Governing the Research .....</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>10.3 The Conceptual Model .....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>10.4 The Domain of Higher Education .....</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>10.5 The development of a conceptual model within this framework .....</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>10.6 The application of the conceptual model .....</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>10.7 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>APPENDIX A – TEQSA THRESHOLD STANDARDS .....</b>	<b>312</b>
<b>APPENDIX B – TEQSA GUIDANCE NOTE: COURSE APPROVAL, DESIGN AND DELIVERY 22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2013 .....</b>	<b>313</b>
<b>APPENDIX C - LIST OF AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES INVESTIGATED DURING THE RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>319</b>
<b>APPENDIX D - RISK INTELLIGENCE MAP (DELOITTE’S BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE 2017).....</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>APPENDIX E - SCHLEE’S THEOREM IN HIGHER EDUCATION RISK MANAGEMENT .....</b>	<b>322</b>
<b>APPENDIX F - URMIA RISK CATEGORIES .....</b>	<b>323</b>

APPENDIX G - VICTORIA UNIVERSITY – RISK MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE .....	325
APPENDIX H - FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTERVIEWS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS RESEARCH .....	330
APPENDIX I - ABSORPTION/ABSORPTION TEST.....	360
APPENDIX J - THE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH INTO THE INNER WORKINGS OF AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES.....	361
APPENDIX K - PARDO'S MODEL OF RISK MANAGEMENT INCOURSE ACCREDITATION.....	370
APPENDIX L - POST-MORTEM ON THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	372
APPENDIX M - PROTOCOL TO GOVERN THE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH INTO THE INTERNAL WORKING OF OTHER UNIVERSITIES .....	374
APPENDIX N - COURSE ACCREDITATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA & ANU .....	378

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Structure of the Thesis	7
Figure 1.2	Summary of the Argument of the Thesis	12
Figure 2.1	What the Universities claim to be seeking from Course Accreditation	29
Figure 2.2	Governance of Course Accreditation in Australian Universities	31
Figure 2.3	The Tripartite Nature of Universities	34
Figure 3.1	URMIA Risk Chart	53
Figure 3.2	The Risks faced by Educational Bodies and their Mitigation	71
Figure 4.1	RMIT Line of Defence Against Risk	83
Figure 5.1	Charles Sturt University Workplace Productivity Program	87
Figure 6.1	The Nature of Documents Examined as Amended by Informants	102
Figure 7.1	The Relationship between Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10	103
Figure 7.2	Higher Ed Strategic Management Risk and Vulnerability Factors	131
Figure 7.3	Categories of Accreditation Risk	132
Figure 7.4	Sequence of Risk Assessment	134
Figure 7.5	Australian Catholic University Course Approvals Process	135
Figure 7.6	University of Adelaide Course Approvals Process	136
Figure 7.7	Charles Darwin University Course Approvals Procedure	137
Figure 8.1	Optimal Risk Maturity	163
Figure 8.2	Risk Management Maturity Assessment Tool	165
Figure 10.1.	Perspectives on Course Accreditation	228
Figure 10.2	Relationship between Observation and Theory	230
Figure 10.3	Frame of Reference	232
Figure 10.4	Establishing a Domain for the Research	235
Figure 10.5	Focus of the Research	238
Figure 10.6	Conceptual Model as an example of Senge's Fifth Discipline	247
Figure 10.7	Course Accreditation as an Exercise in Risk Sentience	248
Figure 10.8	Risk Management as an Example of Senge's Fifth Discipline	249
Figure 10.9	Primary Concepts of the Conceptual Model	250
Figure 10.10	Final Conceptual Model	251
Figure D-1	Risk Intelligence Map	321
Figure H-1	Interview Techniques	331
Figure H-2	Initial Flowchart for Questions	345
Figure K-1	Pardo's Risk Management Model	370
Figure K-2	Possible Model of the Interface between Pardo's Risk Management Model and Shared Governance in Higher Education Course Approval	371
Figure N-1	Committee Interrelationships at the University of Canberra	383
Figure N-2	Course Approval at the University of Canberra	387
Figure N-3	ANU Academic Governance Structure	390
Figure N-4	College Structure at ANU	394

## Glossary

This is a long glossary as many of the terms used in the thesis are specific to the sector and may have a different meaning from their wider use in the community.

For compatibility and convenience these terms follow as closely as possible the definitions used by the [Australian] Tertiary Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). TEQSA provides glossaries in three major locations - The TEQSA *Glossary of Terms* [<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/glossary-terms>] (*Definitions from this source are indicated by the word Gloss in the entries that follow*), the TEQSA *Glossary of Terms as Part A of the Higher Education Standards Framework 2015* [<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/glossary-terms-part-higher-education-standards-framework-2015>] (*Indicated in the entries below by the abbreviation Part A*) and the HEIMSHelp Glossary, a document meant more for technical and reporting purposes rather than risk management or course accreditation. [<https://heimshelp.education.gov.au/resources/glossary>]. [*Indicated by the term HEIMSHelp after the definition*] As might be expected these glossaries are complementary and there is no conflict between them. At the same time many the definitions from these sources are legalistic in tone and verbose, and for this reason most have been shortened or abbreviated to save space.

Where a definition is taken from another work the source is acknowledged. If the definition has been supplied by the researcher (usually as a synthesis from composite sources) the word (*Res - short for researcher*) has been used.

A number of entries relate to jargon. While the meaning of these terms is common knowledge within the sector (or parts of the sector) the expression may otherwise be meaningless to those outside. This is particularly the case with quotes from informants, and hence their inclusion here

It should also be noted that a number of terms have a tighter or more constrained meaning in particular universities. To avoid extending the Glossary to excessive lengths these institutional variations have been ignored except where a precise definition was deemed essential.

### A

**Above Load Allowance** – The enrolment of more students into a program than have been funded or approved by the Commonwealth, with an assumption that some will withdraw before the **census date** (similar to an airline overbooking flights). If the allowance is correct the university will not lose financially. If these assumptions are incorrect the university will have to carry the additional cost, and hence this becomes an important consideration in course proposals. [See also **Turnstile Numbers** and **Effective Enrolments**]

**Academic Board** – The group appointed by the governing body to oversight the academic activities of a university. [The name may vary according to the institution, and while teaching is always the responsibility of this body its coverage may or may not include research] (Res)

**Academic Governance** - A subset of the overall governance of a higher education provider. Academic governance deals with the framework that regulates providers' academic decisions and quality assurance. This includes the policies, processes, definitions of roles, relationships, systems, strategies and resources that ensure academic standards and continuous improvement in academic activities (Gloss)

**Academic Standards** - An agreed specification (such as a defined benchmark or indicator) that is used as a definition of a level of performance or achievement, rule or guideline. Standards may apply to academic outcomes, such as student or graduate achievement of core discipline knowledge or core discipline skills (known as learning outcomes), or to academic processes such as student selection, teaching, research supervision, and assessment (Gloss) {See also TEQSA Standards}

**Accelerated Mode** – A form of program delivery that enables students to complete a program in less than the standard time (Univ of South Australia) Normally approval to offer courses in accelerated mode forms part of the course accreditation process (Res)

**Accreditation (of a course of study)** - A formal process through which a course of study is authorised to be offered by a higher education provider. For providers that are authorised to self-accredit courses of study, the accreditation is granted through a formal internal governance process; otherwise the accreditation must be obtained from TEQSA. A course of study that is self-accredited or accredited by TEQSA may also be 'accredited' by a professional body for different and separate purposes. (See Professional Accreditation) At the same time, accreditation of a course of study by a professional body does not of itself entitle a provider to offer the course of study (Part A) [Do not confuse with Approval of a course of study – see next entry – which is the outcome from this process]

**Adjustment Factors** – Originally (and in normal usage) additional points used to raise a student's admission rank. Now used by extension to indicate any variation applied as a matter of routine to course accreditation or risk management to allow for uncertainties or oversights (i.e., "We normally assume a 15% adjustment factor to cover withdrawals from courses")

**Approval (of a course of study)** - A formal internal governance process to confirm that a course of study is suitable for offer by a higher education provider. Unless a provider has authority to self-accredit its courses, course approval must be followed subsequently by accreditation from TEQSA. (Part A) [In self-accrediting universities a course – at least in theory – is "approved" by Academic Board and "accredited" by the Governing Council. In reality both occur at the same time (Res)]

**Approved Partner** – An organisation with whom a university has a contractual relationship (either formal or informal) for the delivery of services to students (Gloss). [An example would be relations with Apple for the supply of discounted computers]. Approval is given by the university. (The approval of TEQSA is only required if the provider is a non-self-accrediting institution). The use of approved partners normally forms part of the course accreditation procedure.

**Articulation** - An agreement between providers to create a defined pathway that enables a student to progress from a completed course of study to another course of study with automatic admission rights or credit (Gloss)

**Assessment** - A process to determine value or fitness for purpose, such as course assessment or student assessment (Res)

**Attrition** - Withdrawal from courses before completion. The historic attrition rate is one of the factors considered in course accreditation and may be closely monitored by TEQSA (Res)

**Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement** - A supplementary statement to a testamur that provides additional information to enhance understanding of the qualification. (Gloss) Approval of this statement normally forms part of the accreditation process (Res)

**AQF - Australian Qualifications Framework** - Australia's national policy for regulated qualifications (Gloss)

**Auditor** – A person auditing a subject, see next entry (Do not confuse with a financial or regulatory auditor)

**Auditing a subject (Sometimes called "Monitoring a subject")** – Attending classes but not participating in the assessment or receiving credit for the outcome. (Universities that allow auditing normally charge a fee for this service and may or may not maintain records of attendance or enrolment. The number of students auditing subjects may have serious implications for space and equipment, and hence is considered as part of the course accreditation process)

Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) – Quality agency superseded by TEQSA (Gloss) although still found in some course accreditation procedural documentation (Res)

## B

**Benchmarking** - A means by which an entity can:

- demonstrate accountability to stakeholders
- improve networking and collaborative relationships
- generate management information
- develop an increased understanding of practice, process or performance
- garner insights into how improvements might be made. (Gloss)

See also **External Benchmarking & Internal Benchmarking**

**Best Practice** – The practice accepted at a particular point in time as the best way to achieve a specific outcome (Res)

**Branch Campus** – A campus physically remote from the main campus of a university which is generally unable to provide the full services that the university itself may offer (particularly administrative services). The degree autonomy permitted to branch campuses differs from one university to another. (See also **Local Staff, Teaching Centre**)

**Bridging Course (Sometimes known as a Preparation Course)** – A non-award program intended to bring students to the point where they can commence a formal award. (Bridging courses are essentially voluntary in nature and should not be confused with Enabling Courses which are compulsory – See Enabling Course) [Most universities have a separate and less rigorous process for the approval of bridging courses (Res)]

## C

**Campus** - The physical location where a course of study is delivered. The site may or may not be owned or managed by the provider enrolling the student or conducting the teaching. (Gloss). Some universities have different accreditation procedures for different campuses, particularly where local factors exist or where the site is under the control of third parties (Res) [See Dual Accreditation, Branch Campus]

**Census Date** – The date nominated by the Commonwealth at which enrolment numbers are finalised (Do not confuse with “**Return Date**” - the date by which these numbers must be sent to Canberra)

**Combination Course (Combination Delivery)** - A course taught to a combined group of undergraduates and postgraduates in the same class, the difference being a higher expectation when postgraduate students are assessed. The general rule when courses of this type are accredited is that the standard applicable must be for the higher level. Courses not approved for combination delivery should not be available to mixed classes. (Gloss) It is usual practice to approve these courses in the normal manner as part of a one stage process but to give each level a separate course number. Combination courses are discouraged by TEQSA (and by most universities) but may be offered under sufferance when numbers are insufficient to make separate classes viable (Res)

**Combined Award** - Two separate awards studied concurrently leading to a single testamur, usually integrated to the point where the core component of one forms the electives of the other, such as a Business/Law degree (Gloss) [These courses are sometime known incorrectly as Joint Awards – see **Joint Award** below - Joint Awards which are offered jointly by two separate providers, each of which accredits the award separately. Combined awards are accredited in a single process and are offered by a single provider]

**Committee of Management** – The body appointed to oversight a multi-purpose campus and to co-ordinate the activities of all providers on site, containing representatives from each, often under the



control of an independent chair (See **Multi-purpose Campus** and **Dual Campus**). In the case of a multi-purpose campus there is a sharing of rooms and facilities, and an indication (generally by sign-off) that these resources will be made available is usually required as part of the course approval process. On a dual campus there is no sharing of teaching facilities (although there may be a sharing of library resources, IT, canteen, parking, security, etc.) and as a general rule no separate input is required from the Committee of Management as part of the course accreditation process. [It is normal practice, however, to keep this body informed of anticipated developments to ensure that there is no interference with the work of others]

**Complementary Provider** – A body separate from the provider involved in the teaching, or other support to a course (Gloss). Complementary providers could include groups such as TAFE, industry trainers, hospitals providing clinical places, specialist language teachers, music instructors, and so on. These groups operate under the control and supervision of the provider and are not registered by TEQSA. Their use, however, must be foreshadowed in course proposal documentation, with the provider remaining responsible for their performance and any risks that may arise (Res) [See also **Independent Providers** below]

**Contract Awards** – Programs offered under contract to external sponsors (often an employer or a professional association). Entry to these courses is normally restricted to those nominated by the sponsor, who would normally determine – or at least strongly suggest – the curriculum, although all teaching is provided by the university. These courses can be AQF compliant (in which case a formal award, such as a Graduate Certificate, can be conferred) or may be non-compliant and regarded as non-award courses. In the case of the former the normal approval process is followed. If the latter formal approval may still be required (depending on the university and the sponsor) or a revised procedure can be used (Res)

**Course Accreditation Committee** – A sub-committee of Academic Board that assesses the academic merit of course proposals. Course Accreditation Committees, if satisfied, normally “recommend approval” to Academic Board as the final stage of the accreditation process (Res) [See also Accreditation above]

**Course completion** - The successful completion of all academic requirements for a course of study. (Gloss) The course completion rate is often used as a benchmark by regulators and universities in the cyclic review of courses (Res)

**Course Coordinator** – The staff member responsible for oversight of a course (Res)

**Contract Course** – A course offered under contract to an external party (Gloss). [See also **Non-Portfolio Course** and **Restricted Course**]

**Co-requisite** – Study required either before or simultaneously with enrolment in another subject. (Co-requisites have long been falling out of favour in Australian Higher Education. Where required, however they must normally be listed and justified in the course proposal documentation (See also **pre-requisite**))

**Course of study** - A coherent sequence of units of study leading to an award of a qualification(s). The use of ‘course of study’ in the Standards includes both coursework and higher degree by research programs unless otherwise specified. Courses of study are sometimes known as ‘programs’ (Part A). Courses of Study – and the subjects within them – are the normal units of analysis of course accreditation committees.

**CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students)** - A searchable database, run by the Australian Government, which lists all Australian education providers (and their courses) for those studying on student visas. (Gloss) One requirement of the accreditation process is assurance that what is proposed conforms to CRICOS requirements (Res)

Critical incident - A traumatic event, or the threat of such an event (within or outside of Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury (Part A) [TEQSA requires notification of all critical incidents as part of the risk management process, including accidents, damage to property or threats to reputation, if these are non-trivial or likely to cause embarrassment to the sector Res]

## D

**Degree Mill** – A bogus (and unregistered) higher education institution offering awards for money. The operation of degree mills is illegal in Australia (Res)

**Deposited Copy** – The official documentation for a course filed in hard copy in an institution's archive, normally with original signatures, etc. If there is a dispute about what was originally approved (or what the university has promised to provide within a course) the authoritative source is the deposited copy

**DET (Department of Education and Training)** - The Australian Government department with responsibility for developing and administering higher education policy and programs and administering funding under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. (Gloss)

**Dual Accreditation** – A process that may occur where a university teaches on premises it does not control, such as a TAFE College. The course is accredited in the normal manner by the university and it then requires further approval by the owner of the site before it can be offered [This second approval normally relates to any inconvenience, interference or other problems likely to arise. It does not involve a reconfirmation of academic merit, etc (Gloss)]

**Dual awards** - Two or more awards studied concurrently (Such as a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Education) that normally lead to separate graduation ceremonies and more than one *testamur*. (Failure to complete one award does not debar the student from conferral of the other). Each award is approved separately by the institution concerned (Gloss)

[**Dual awards** should be distinguished from **Joint Awards**, a term with two meanings. In the first instance it is an award offered jointly by two independent providers (see **Joint Providers** below) In the second case it is a combined award offered by one institution that requires only one approval (see **Combined Award** above) with students attending only one graduation and receiving only one *testamur* (Res)]

**Dual Campuses** – A campus on which two or more providers (generally VET and Higher Education) operate side by side but without a sharing of teaching facilities. [They may, however, share other resources to achieve economies of scale - See **Multi-purpose Campuses**]

**Dual Level University** – A university offering VET as well as Higher Education awards (Gloss) [VET courses often require a different approval procedure to their higher education counterparts, and thus there may be two separate accreditation processes in the same institution]

## E

**Effective Enrolments** – The number of students enrolled in a course on census day (See also Turnstile Number and Above Load Allowance) [The effective enrolment is often a key factor in determining the viability of a course or subject (Res)]

**Embedded Staff (Embedded administrators)** – Specialised staff – generally administrative personnel such as Faculty Managers or Faculty Accountants, but possibly clerical assistants as well – who are permanently located within a faculty or other unit (and hence answerable for the performance of their duties to the head of that unit) but who are part of a wider group within the university, with the manager of that wider group (such as the University Secretary) supervising the quality of their performance. Tension between these groups of managers may complicate the role of incumbents (See also **Faculty Staff**) (Res)

**Enabling course** - A mandatory program to prepare students for study at a higher level. (Do not confuse with Bridging Course. A bridging course does not lead to a formal award and is rarely compulsory. An enabling course may lead to a formal award, is more tightly structured and is normally compulsory for all who are unable to meet the criteria for study at the next level. A Masters Preparation program is an example of an enabling course, an English Language program of a Bridging Course. There may be a simplified accreditation procedure for bridging courses. Enabling courses must be accredited in the standard manner)

**ESOS (Education Services for Overseas Students)** - The legal framework that governs the delivery of education to overseas students studying in Australia on a student visa (Gloss) Unless overseas students are specifically excluded from a program (as in certain Nursing awards available to permanent residents only) all Australian university courses must be ESOS compliant – a point checked during the accreditation process (Res)

**ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students)** - Courses offered to students studying in Australia on student visas as preparation for tertiary study. The word ‘Intensive’ is a visa requirement that denotes a full-time study load (20 scheduled course contact hours per week). (Gloss) [As few ELICOS courses lead to an AQF recognized qualification the approval process need not follow standard institutional procedure and is often much abbreviated (Res)]

**English language proficiency** - The ability of students to use the English language to make and communicate meaning in spoken and written contexts while completing their course of study. A statement of the expected language proficiency is normally required in all course proposals (Gloss)

**Enterprise Risk Management** - A coordinated “system wide” approach to risk that seeks to combine risk identification and amelioration with effective communication to and from all parts of the organizational network (Gloss) [When TEQSA speaks about “Risk Management” it effectively means “Enterprise Risk Management” unless the context suggests otherwise (Res)]

**External Accreditation** – Additional accreditation by a non-government body, such as a professional group or a learned society such as the Institute of Engineers Australia (Gloss). While external accreditation is not a legal requirement, failure to achieve this recognition may impair the future employment of graduates. [Do not confuse with **Professional Registration** where requirements are more rigid (Res)]

**Extension Studies (Extension Subjects)** – Additional subjects taken over and above those required to satisfy requirements for completion of a course, but which do not lead to an additional qualification (Gloss). These are normally foreshadowed when proposal is submitted for approval as an extension of a course (Res)

**External Advisory Committee** – A body appointed by a university to provide advice on course content and employment requirements (Gloss) [The role is purely advisory, and it is not mandatory for a university to heed the advice offered – Res]

**External Benchmarking** - Benchmarking provided by someone other than the provider (Gloss)

## F

**Faculty Staff** – Staff employed locally by a faculty (or similar group) and paid from faculty funds (research assistants, clerical assistants, etc). The first loyalty of this group is often to the faculty as their immediate employer rather than the university as a whole. (See also Embedded Staff. Note that in some cases embedded staff can be paid from a central cost centre while in others they may be paid locally. Faculty staff are always paid from faculty funds) (See also Local Staff)

**Fence-Line Agreements** – A term with three meanings;

- An internal agreement preventing one group from intruding on the work of another, thus preventing duplication and disputes. {Thus, a Business faculty may have a fence-line agreement with its Science, Engineering and IT counterparts about the teaching of Computing). The need for prior fence-line agreements can sometimes be found in course accreditation procedures, where they are designed to prevent disputes as approval proceeds
- An agreement between VET and Higher Education providers to ensure the smooth progression of students from one sector to the other [i.e., VET will take them so far, after which Higher Education will take them further on their journey without the need for repetition or duplication of skills already learnt] These agreements are common in the “non-taught” component of courses [See **Non-Taught Subjects**]
- An agreement between two or more providers of a similar nature about the geographic areas on which they will concentrate in their advertising of courses and recruitment of students. (Usually found where university drawing areas overlap state boundaries) These agreements may be required as part of the course proposal documentation. [Note -These agreements do not prevent anyone from the other area applying to or being accepted by the other university. It is simply that the institutions concerned agree to give each other a fair go when competing for students]

**Field of education** - The classification system (split in to three levels) used by higher education providers to classify courses of study, specialisations and units of study. Field of education groupings of courses and specialisations are on the basis of similarity of potential professions, rather than similarity of content, while units of study are coded on the basis of a likeness in terms of their subject matter. (Gloss & HEIMSHelp). The field of study determines the HECS payable by students and as such is expected to form a mandatory component of course accreditation proposals (Res)

**Financial viability** – The financial resources and financial management capacity to sustain higher education provision consistent with the requirements of the Provider Registration Standards outlined in the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* (Gloss). [Providers examine the financial viability of courses. TEQSA examines the financial viability of providers (Res)]

**Franchisee** – An approved provider that has rented the intellectual property and course material of another university to avoid the need to develop its own material (usually done in cases of urgency where time does not permit normal course development). If a course has been approved by the parent university (the franchiser) the approval process in the franchisee – if self-accrediting - may be much reduced or eliminated entirely, thus further saving time. (If the franchisee is non-self-accrediting the approval of an external panel is required in the normal manner). The franchisee may enrol students in its own name and is generally accorded more latitude in governance and control over the program than a **Teaching Agency** or **Teaching Partner**. Both the franchiser and franchisee remain legally and financially separate, with staff employed by the franchisee rather than the parent university (although the appointment of staff may occasionally require the franchiser’s approval to protect the reputation of the course itself). Franchising is essentially a way of saving time in getting courses to market by self-accrediting providers, or as a means to “test the waters” before a firm commitment is made (See also **Teaching Agency**)

G

**Governance** – Catchall term for the managerial control exercised over higher education institutions

**Governance of course approval** – The oversight of course approval within a university. While course approval is ultimately the responsibility of the Governing Body on the recommendation of Academic Board, the latter is normally assisted by groups such as the institutional executive, institutional leaders at various levels and specialised advisors

**Governing Body** – The body with ultimate decision making authority over a higher education provider and its operations (Gloss). Often called the “University Council” (Res)

**GAA (Government Accreditation Agency)** - State and territory government accrediting authorities (Such as the NSW Board of Higher Education) that were previously responsible for accrediting higher education qualifications and authorising non-self-accrediting higher education providers (Gloss). Many of these functions have now been subsumed by TEQSA, although the state may still need to provide approval in specific contexts, as required for example by the NSW Anatomy Act, hence the continued use of this acronym in procedural documentation (Res)

**Graduand** – A person eligible to graduate who has yet to pass through a graduation ceremony (Gloss). [The distinction between Graduand and Graduate is important for funding and hence is noted in university reporting and documentation]

**Graduate Attributes** - Generic learning outcomes that refer to transferable, non-discipline specific skills that a graduate may achieve through learning that have application in study, work and life contexts (Gloss). A statement of the anticipated graduate attributes is now mandatory in most course accreditation proposals (Res)

H

**Higher degree** (sometimes known in course procedures as a “later degree” or a “subsequent degree”)  
- An award at AQF Level 8 or above that normally requires possession of a Bachelor’s degree. (Note however that a Bachelor Honours Award is not classified as a higher degree) (Part A). Higher degrees may require a more intensive accreditation procedure than their undergraduate counterparts, depending on the university – Res). [*Distinguish between Higher Degree and Higher Education Award – see next entry*]

**Higher Education Award** - A qualification covered by level 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 or 10 of the Australian Qualifications Framework that falls within the jurisdiction of TEQSA (Gloss). Only registered providers can offer higher education awards (Res) [See also Complementary Providers above]

**Higher Education Provider (provider/HEP)** - Defined in the TEQSA Act as a constitutional corporation authorised to offer or confer a regulated higher education award (Gloss). [A provider is the body that *confers* an award. It need not be the one teaching or developing it, and the provider may or may not have self-accrediting status. There is in fact nothing to prevent anyone in Australia from offering a course at tertiary level, irrespective of their qualifications, provided there is no breach of copyright, no intent to deceive, and that the students are over 18 (thus avoiding child protection legislation). The offence lies in *conferring* a degree. Only a registered higher education provider can confer degrees (Res)] [See also Complementary Provider and Independent Provider]

**Higher Education Private Provider (HEPP)** – An entity other than a Public Provider authorised to confer Higher Education awards. (It should be noted that this category includes the so called “private universities”, such as Bond and the University of Notre Dame Australia as well as all non-government post-secondary providers) (See also **Public and Private Providers**)

**Higher Education Support Staff** - The generic name for all who work in or for a university but who do not participate in the actual teaching of students or the personal conduct of research (Gloss) [This includes some staff who might otherwise be regarded as academics, such as the Vice Chancellor as well as administrators, counsellors, professional staff, and so on (Res)]

**Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP)** - A legislative advisory body, established under the [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011](#) (TEQSA Act), with a responsibility for the establishment of standards (commonly known as the Higher Education Threshold Standards)

for the delivery of higher education in Australia (Gloss) (See also Higher Education Threshold Standards (HES Threshold Standards 2015 / HES Framework)

**Higher Education Sector** – A collective term, often used to embrace all Higher Education Providers, but used throughout this document as a means of referring refer to the university sector only (See also **Higher Education Provider**, and **University**)

**Higher Education Threshold Standards (HES Threshold Standards 2015 / HES Framework)** - Requirements set by the Minister for Education and Training on the advice of a panel with expertise in the delivery of higher education. The Higher Education Threshold Standards is the minimum level of achievement that a provider must meet and maintain to registered to deliver higher education courses of study (Gloss)

**HEIMS / HEIMSHelp (Higher Education Information Management System)** – Information system developed by the Commonwealth Government used to convey higher education data and information to Canberra (Gloss). [HEIMSHelp contains the glossary for this system]. While only referred to occasionally in the text of the thesis HEIMS – because it shapes the form in which data is required by the Commonwealth – increasingly (albeit indirectly) shapes the course accreditation and risk management procedures of Australian universities. [If information is not provided in this format it has to be converted before submission, and it is much easier and simpler if the system can be shaped to reflect the data required in this form from the beginning (Res)]

## I

**Incidental Fees** – Fees (which may be optional or compulsory) over and above the standard fee for a course, such as excursion fees, equipment fees, payment for expendables, and so on (Gloss). These fees are normally paid personally by the student and while collected by the university are not taken into account in assessing the financial viability of proposals as part of the accreditation process. [In certain cases, such as Executive MBA's these fees can be quite substantial and represent a significant revenue flow (Res)]

**Independent Provider** – A provider that is not registered with TEQSA (such as a coaching college or private individual) that offers higher education subjects but is unable to confer awards (Gloss). Students enrol with these providers in a voluntary capacity for preparation, supplementation or convenience (many teach in native languages as well as English) and may subsequently use their results to apply for credit towards a formal degree. (The amount of credit – if any – is at the discretion of the recipient institution. Most universities set limits on the amount of credit that can be claimed from independent providers as well as nominating the independent providers they recognize]. Independent Providers, unlike **Complementary Providers** are rarely mentioned in course documentation, are outside the control of TEQSA and are not considered as part of the accreditation process. [NOTE; The majority of independent providers offer bona fide services and those long established may have a reputation for quality, consistency and reliability. They should not be confused with degree mills – See **Degree Mill**]

**INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education)** – The international network of Higher Education regulators. [TEQSA is an active member of this body and INQAAHE plays a major – although often unrealised – role in Australian Higher Education] (Res)

**Institutional Quality Assurance** - The fifth domain of the TEQSA **Higher Education Standards Framework** (see separate entry). TEQSA requires providers to ensure that “the mechanisms that are established by the higher education provider to assure itself of the quality of the higher education it provides (Institutional Quality Assurance), and to maintain effective governance of its operations (both Academic and Corporate Governance)” (TEQSA Contextual Overview of the HES Framework 2015)

**Internal Benchmarking** - Benchmarking conducted internally by a provider, often as a form of peer review (Gloss) Course accreditation is sometimes regarded as an extension of internal benchmarking (Res)

**International Student** – A person who is required to hold a student visa while studying in Australia (ESOS). *[This general yet quite specific definition is often overlooked by university staff. Not everyone whose permanent home is overseas is necessarily an international student, nor is every person resident in Australia a domestic student – the key test is whether they are required to hold a student visa during the period of study (Res)]*

## J

**Joint Awards** - Courses offered through collaborative or cooperative arrangements between two or more higher education providers. (Gloss) Courses of this nature must normally pass through the accreditation procedures of both institutions. [Do not confuse with Combined Awards (Res)]

## K

**Key Personnel** - A term used specifically by TEQSA to indicate the staff responsible for institutional outcomes and/or conformity with compliance requirements, who will be held at fault if failure occurs. This may include both executive and operational staff (Gloss)

## L

**Local Staff** – Staff employed locally, often at a remote campus who are not expected to move elsewhere if operational requirements change. The first loyalty of local staff is often to the campus rather than the faculty or university

## M

**Material Change** - Under section 29(1) of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*, a registered higher education provider is required to notify TEQSA if any event occurs (or is likely to occur) that will significantly affect a providers ability to meet threshold standards or require the National Register to be updated. Material changes to an accredited course of study (by non-self-accrediting institutions) or to the operations of a higher education provider may cause TEQSA to take regulatory action (Gloss) [This includes changes to procedures as well as changes to key personal (Res)]

**Mode of Study** - The type of instruction available to students. Examples include face to face attendance, distance or independent learning, intensive delivery, blended learning, and so on (Gloss)

**Multi-purpose Campus** – A campus used for the teaching of post-secondary education at varying levels (such as VET and Higher Education) ***with shared facilities common to all students***. There may be a single provider for all levels, but it is more common to find a university and a VET provider (or perhaps even a high school) sharing classrooms and amenities. Where there is more than one provider, the campus – but not the teaching itself – is overseen by a Committee of Management (See **Committee of Management**) [Important - Distinguish between **multi-purpose campuses** and **dual campuses**. On a multi-purpose campus, the teaching facilities are shared, and this in turn requires an integration of timetables, rooming, and so on, through the local Committee of Management, which may require a sign-off as part of the course approval process. Dual campuses exist where two or more providers operate side by side (such as VET and Higher Education) but where each has separate teaching space and associated facilities (labs, etc) with economy of scale being achieved through a shared administration, a shared library, shared cleaning, shared security, parking, and so on, with the role of a weakened Committee of Management - which has no input into the accreditation process -

being simply to ensure that neither group interferes with the other [See also **Committee of Management**]

## N

**National Code** (The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018) - Legislation providing nationally consistent standards for the conduct of registered providers and the registration of their courses (Gloss) [While notionally covering services to overseas students only, it is impossible for providers to distinguish between these students and their local counterparts, and for this reason the National Code has become the de facto standard for the sector – Res]

**National Protocols** (National Protocols got Higher Education Approval Processes) - Developed in 2000 and revised in 2007, these protocols were a key element of the national quality assurance framework for Australian higher education. Now obsolete but aspects of the National Protocols were incorporated into the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015*. (Gloss) [The reason for inclusion of this now obsolete term lies in the fact that there is frequent reference to the “National Protocols” (as an unremoved residual legacy) in the course accreditation procedural documents published by Australian universities and hence in the statements of informants – Res]

**National Register** (National Register of Higher Education Providers) - The authoritative source of information on the status of registered higher education providers in Australia. The National Register was established and maintained under section 198 of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*. (Gloss)

**Nested courses/ Nested degrees** - Programs of study within a broader area that can lead to graduation with a lesser award. While many nested degrees are little more than early exit points (such as a Graduate Certificate offering an early exit from a Master’s program) nested degrees sharing subjects with longer programs can also be offered as stand-alone qualifications (Gloss). [The key point, however, is that a nested degree is accredited at the same time, using the same instruments and documents, as the primary award (Res)]

**Non-AQF award** [Sometimes known simply as “non-awards”] - A course leading to a qualification or award (such as a Certificate of Attainment) not covered by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Non-AQF qualifications or awards must not use AQF terminology (Gloss) [Accreditation procedures for non-AQF programs may follow a different pattern to their AQF compliant counterparts, depending on the university (Res)] (See also Contract Awards)

**Non-Portfolio Course** – A course that satisfies the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework and leads to a recognized award, but which is not available to the public as part of a university’s advertised portfolio of courses (Gloss). Many contract courses fall within this category (See also **Contract Course** and **Restricted Course**)

**Non-Taught Subjects (Sometimes called “Nominal Subjects”)** – Subjects that appear in a course sequence that are neither offered nor taught by the university. These subjects normally appear where all students are required pass through another provider (often VET) as part of their first year, as in certain Engineering degrees. This saves the university money, filters out the ill prepared, and may enable facilities such as workshops and laboratories to concentrate on the needs of more senior students. The subjects taught elsewhere are shown in the course documentation, and are given formal names and subject numbers, but have the added comment “Non-Taught” to show that they are not provided by the university. [Non-taught subjects are included within the student load for full time/part time purposes and hence must be shown on the student record system. They may also attract HECS. The point is that they will not be taught by the university]

## P



**Pre-requisite** – Study required before a subject or course can be taken. Prerequisites are normally stated in course proposal documentation (See also **co-requisite**)

**Professional Body** – A group of specialists established for a particular purpose. There are two types of professional body;

Those with a responsibility for the registration of practitioners

Those with a responsibility for providing networking opportunities for practitioners

While both have a significant impact on the behavioural response of universities it is important to note that these bodies have no control over the institution although they may impose considerable influence on its activities.

**Professional Registration Authority** – A body responsible for the professional registration (and hence the right to practice) of graduates, such as the Nurses and Midwives Registration Board of Australia. (Gloss) These groups are completely separate from TEQSA although the requirements of these bodies are always taken into account as part of the course accreditation process

**Provider** – A body authorised to offer Higher Education awards in Australia (Gloss)

**Public and Private Providers** – A Public Provider is an institution that has originated from government initiative and is viewed as owned by the government. A Private Provider is a body originating from another source that operates at a greater length from the government according to the tenets of its proprietors. Despite this, both are governed by common sets of rules, oversights, and restrictions according to the level of teaching. It should be noted that not all public providers are self-accrediting, even though they may offer higher education awards (i.e., TAFE Colleges) and not all private providers have been denied self-accreditation (i.e., Bond University, The Australian Catholic University, and so on) (See also Independent Provider, Higher Education Private Provider (HEPP))

## Q

**Quality** - While the interpretation of this term varies from one institution to another, it has been taken throughout this document to mean “fitness for purpose, appropriate to the intent of the provider”

**Quality Manager** - The person appointed by a university to oversight the “fitness for purpose” of its outcomes and systems. The Quality Manager normally has greater responsible for course accreditation than the **Risk Manager** (see separate entry)

## R

**Recognition of Prior Learning** - RPL (Sometimes known as Credit for Prior Learning –CPL) - An assessment process that involves examining an individual’s past experience (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine their exemption from the certain parts of a degree (Gloss)

**Regulatory Risk** - Actual or potential risk events (regarding a provider’s operations and performance) that indicate that the provider may not meet the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* – either currently or in the future.(Gloss) [When TEQSA talks about Risk it is normally Regulatory Risk that it has in mind (Res)]

**Restricted Course** – A course to which entry is restricted. (There may be many grounds for this, such as a requirement for a particular skill (as in Music), prior study in a discipline, foreign language ability, Australian residency, and so on. The restrictions to be imposed are normally confirmed as part of the course accreditation process). [While most university courses are subject to certain limitations –

such as their non-availability to non-matriculants – these are generally taken for granted and not mentioned in the course documentation. In the case of Restricted Courses, however, there are additional restrictions mentioned in the documentation that apply specifically to the program involved] (Res)

**Return Date** – The date by which enrolment figures (and other data on courses) must be returned to Canberra. Failure to meet this date may lead to delays in funding (Res)

**Risk Appetite** - The willingness of an organization to take or accept known or potential risks (Res)

**Risk Assessment** - The overall process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation (Gloss) [In certain universities the term has a wider meaning and includes a willingness to identify and accept the potential consequences – (Res)]

**Risk Assessment Framework** - The regulatory risk management policy and processes of TEQSA as required under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (Gloss)

**Risk Management Best Practices** - Procedures believed by peers to be the most effective for the assessment and management of risk (TEQSA Risk Assessment Framework 2018)

**Risk Management Committee** - A subcommittee of a provider's governing body responsible for the oversight of risk throughout the organisation (Gloss) [This committee may be known by a variety of names, such as Audit and Risk Committee, Risk Advisory Committee, and so on, depending on the institution. It is a TEQSA requirement that such a committee should exist and be operational (Res)]

**Risk Management Culture** - The approach to risk developed by an institution through experience over time and applied to its daily work (TEQSA Risk Assessment Framework 2018) [Risk Management Culture is one of the criteria used by TEQSA in assessing higher education providers (Res)]

**Risk Management Plan** - Strategy to avoid, mitigate or reduce the consequences of risk in higher education (Gloss) [TEQSA requires all providers to maintain and implement a risk management plan (Res)]

**Risk Manager** - The person appointed to oversight the management of risk in a university. Unlike **quality managers** (see separate entry) few risk managers have direct contact with (or responsibility for) the course accreditation process (Res)

**Risk Response** - The response made by a higher education provider to known or potential risk (Gloss) [TEQSA expects risk response to form part of each provider's risk management plan (Res)]

## S

**Sandwich Course** – A course taught partly in the university and partly (by release) in the workplace. The university may or may not supervise the work done off campus (See **Wilson Model**). The accreditation of a sandwich course may involve an accreditation of the workplace (and/or the industry partner) as well as approval of the program itself.

**Sector** – the generalised name for all bodies included in a group. In the case of this document the word relates to self-accrediting Higher Education providers only

**Site Map** – Common abbreviation for the TEQSA Site Map (See **TEQSA Site Map**)

**Subject (Called “unit” in some universities)** - The discrete components used to construct a course of study (Gloss)

## T

**Teaching Agent (Teaching Agency, Teaching Partner)** – A person or organization authorised to teach on behalf of a university. A teaching agency has little autonomy and normally plays no part on the design or approval of courses, or the assessment of students as these tasks remain the responsibility of the university. A teaching agent is unable to advertise itself as though it was the university, cannot enrol students in these programs at its own volition, and cannot confer awards). Normally a teaching agent has no power to amend courses – an exception arises with certain specialised programs, such as Theology, Tourism or Hospitality where the university may accredit these changes, or even approve courses developed by agents on their behalf. Many teaching agencies also offer VET awards in their own name in complete independence from the university. A number of interstate and regional universities provide services to students (particularly international students) in the capital cities through teaching agents. (Distinguish clearly between a **Teaching Agent** and a **Franchisee** – the accreditation arrangements of each are quite separate)

**Teaching agreement** – An internal arrangement within a university allowing a particular group to teach subjects that others might consider their area of responsibility. (Thus, the Maths Department of a university may agree to allow Education staff to teach Maths to primary teachers, not because these staff are more learned than their professional mathematical colleagues but simply because they have a greater awareness of what their students require). These arrangements may be oral, or where groups feel threatened may form part of the course proposal documentation

**Teaching Centre** – A facility remote from the heart of the institution that the university uses for teaching purposes only. (Teaching centres may have minimal administrative support and may have so called “fly in-fly out” staffing. Premises may be rented or form part of another educational establishment, such as a TAFE College. Staff are employed by the university, however, and students are regarded as part of the university’s complement rather than the complement of the owner of the premises. Do not confuse with **teaching agent**)

**Teaching Restraint** – An internal agreement within a university restricting the type of student who is entitled to take a particular subject (often because it will be taught at a lesser level than required for a formal award in that discipline). Teaching restraints – sometimes known as “student restraints” - are permanent and are usually incorporated into course documentation. [Do not confuse with **pre-requisites** and **co-requisites**)

**TEQSA** - Common acronym for the (Australian) Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

**TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework** - Standards developed by TEQSA for the higher education sector. These standards are in two parts – Part A, Standards for Higher Education (the minimum acceptable requirement for the delivery of higher education) and Part B, Criteria for Higher Education Providers (the minimum acceptable standards for registration as a higher education provider). The standards (sometimes called the “threshold standards” – see separate entry – are further divided into domains and sub-domains (sectors). (TEQSA HES Framework 2015). Both are highly relevant for risk management in course accreditation (Res)

**TEQSA 5.1 (TEQSA Standard 5.1)** - Higher education jargon for the TEQSA regulation governing higher education course accreditation in both self-accrediting and non-self-accrediting providers, a term frequently used without further explanation by informants, sometimes simply as 5.1. (i.e., “We are fully 5.1 compliant”)

TEQSA states

“5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation

TEQSA’s main focus will be on ensuring that the provider has an effective internal process for approval of all courses, which includes rigorous academic scrutiny through the institutional academic governance processes of the provider, independently of those involved directly in delivery of the course of study. All providers are expected to have such an approval process, whether they have self-accrediting authority or their courses are accredited by TEQSA” [TEQSA HESF Domain 5 2015]

**TEQSA 5.3 (TEQSA Standard 5.3)** - Higher education jargon for the TEQSA regulation regarding the monitoring, review and improvement of courses after approval that has since been incorporated into the course accreditation procedures of virtually all Australian universities. (Often referred to simply as 5.3 without further explanation – i.e., “We are tightening up our 5.3 procedures”)

TEQSA states

### 5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement

This Section requires a provider to conduct periodic, comprehensive reviews of all courses (at least every seven years with evidence to be provided as part of the renewal of registration application to TEQSA), backed by more frequent monitoring of the day-to-day delivery of courses of study, for example, periodic reviews of units and annual review of student performance. We will expect to see that such reviews are conducted (or will be conducted in the case of a new provider or course of study) according to the requirements of the Standards as part of the provider’s normal operations, and that the findings of the reviews are evidently used to generate improvements. In demonstrating that it meets this Standard, a provider will need to demonstrate in particular that reviews of courses of study involve considered oversight by the institutional academic governance processes, external referencing (which can include moderation of assessment against other programs, benchmarking of student success and course design against programs at other providers) and feedback from students.

**TEQSA Regulatory Principles** - Statement of policy by TEQSA giving the three basic principles for regulation of the Australian Higher Education Sector;

The principle of regulatory necessity

The principle of reflecting risk

The principle of proportionate regulation (TEQSA HES Framework 2015).

These principles have subsequently been incorporated into the Risk Management (and other) policies of most Australian universities

**TEQSA Site Map (Jargon – “site map”)** - Located at <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sitemap>. The normal starting point for information on TEQSA standards and procedures, as this page gives links to all TEQSA policies and documents. The term is more frequently used where something is not mentioned by TEQSA, and hence is left to the discretion of the university (i.e., “It’s not on the site map, but...”)

**Threshold Standards (Risk Standards)** - The minimum that can be accepted by TEQSA as defined in the Higher Education Standards Framework 2015.

“The Standards encompass the matters that a higher education provider would ordinarily be expected to address in the course of directing and monitoring its higher education activities and managing any associated risks. Each Standards statement addresses an underlying area of risk(s) to be managed.

This may be a risk to the sustainability and viability of the provider, to the quality of education provided, to the experiences of students in relation to a higher education provider, to the quality of learning outcomes on graduation, to the reputation of higher education in Australia or a combination of these.” (Higher Education Standards Framework 2015)

Both TEQSA and the universities stress that the threshold standards are the *minimum* that can be accepted, not the level desirable. Failure to achieve the threshold standards may lead to deregistration (Res)

**Turnstile Numbers (Turnstile Figures)** – The number of students enrolled in a course or subject on the first day of its commencement. [This number is usually diminished through attrition between the start of the semester and census day as students withdraw. The risk in course accreditation being that the difference between turnstile numbers (the number who commence) and census numbers (the number reported on census day on which the university is paid) may make the program unviable (Res)]

## U

**University** – An Australian self-accrediting higher education provider established by Act of Parliament (Gloss) [The use of the word is protected by Commonwealth legislation to prevent

deception (Res)] As there is considerable variation in the legislation establishing universities in Australia further generalisation as to their purpose, structure or mode of operation is impractical

**Universities of Specialisation** – Australian universities on which restrictions have been placed regarding the disciplines they offer. (At the time of writing the only example is the Australian University of Divinity, although others, such as the Australian Maritime College, have been suggested for inclusion if this body's links with the University of Tasmania are loosened)

**Unrestricted university** – An Australian university on which no restriction (apart from funding) has been placed on the disciplines that can be offered, used to distinguish these providers from

**Universities of Specialisation** on which these restrictions have been applied, such as the Australian University of Divinity. All of the universities discussed in this document are unrestricted universities. (See also **University**)

## V

**VET (Vocational Education and Training)** – Awards at AQF level 5 or below (Gloss) [There is slight overlap between VET and Higher Education awards at Level 6 (Advanced Diploma/Associate Degree) although this will be ignored in the thesis]

**VET Provider** – An organization or individual authorised to offer educational training awards at AFQ Level 5 or below (See also **Dual-Sector University**)

**Voluntary Study** – Additional work undertaken by a student in a voluntary (i.e., non-mandatory) capacity that is approved and recognized by a university towards the completion of a degree (Gloss). A “study abroad” program is an example of voluntary study – the student does not have to do it to gain the award, but if done the completion of this task will be recognized by the university). Voluntary study may not attract fees or funding but its availability (and the way in which it will be monitored) must normally be indicated in course accreditation documentation. [Distinguish between

### Voluntary Study and Volunteer Subject]

**Volunteer Subject** – A term originating in the US, meaning “an elective” [The term is rare in normal conversation in Australia other than in discussions of student record software. A mandatory subject – using the same terminology – is normally referred to in software documentation as a “**core subject**”) [i.e., “*There are eight core subjects in this Master's degree and four volunteer subjects*”. This means that students have a choice of subject, not that they can opt out and do less if they so desire]. The term is not recognized by TEQSA and to avoid confusion its general use is discouraged

## W

**Wilson Model** – A system of business – university collaboration, named after Professor Tim Wilson's 2012 report to the UK Government. Under the Wilson Model universities take responsibility only for those things they provide, leaving the rest to the industry partner. (While this is particularly true for accidents or incidents such as discrimination, it also applies to the quality of teaching and the scope of instruction) Under this model a university cannot be blamed for the unsatisfactory performance of its industry partner. The Wilson model – a system to free the university from liability – is frequently mentioned in the accreditation documentation of **sandwich courses**.

**Workplace Learning** – Knowledge gained in the workplace, usually while in paid employment. The instruction may be formal (as a result of a training program) or informal (knowledge picked up independently on the job). It is important to note that workplace learning is not under the control or supervision of a university, and because of its variability may or may not be recognized for credit towards a degree. [Distinguish between **Workplace Learning** and **Work Placement** – the latter

being under the control of the university and forming a normal part of course accreditation documentation]

**Work Placement** – The placement of students in the workplace for a set period as part of their formal studies. Under normal circumstances students are not paid by the placement provider, nor are they regarded as “staff” for the purposes of insurance, risk management of the disciplinary procedures of the placement provider. [This distinguishes those undergoing this form of instruction from those undertaking **Sandwich Courses**, who while not necessarily paid by the industry partner are still subject to the normal rules and discipline of the workplace] Work Placement may sometimes be known by more specific titles, such as Clinical Placement, Teaching Practicum, or Work Internment. Any requirement for work placement, including the relationship to be created between the university and the placement provider, would normally form part of the course accreditation documentation. [See also **Wilson Model**]

## Y

**Year-** Unlike terms specifying block periods (semester, term, and so on) the word “year” has multiple meanings in Australian universities, and what is intended can only be understood from the context.

The most frequent of these meanings are;

A Calendar Year from January to December (i.e.; “This is the year 2018”)

Twelve months from a particular event (i.e.; This course should be reviewed in a year’s time”)

A progression stage in an award (i.e.; “He is a second year student” – *which need not mean that he is in the second year of attendance at the university - he may well be enrolled part time, have taken leave at some stage, have received accelerated progression through advanced standing, and so on*)

An indicator of rigour and expectation. (i.e.; “Advanced Calculus can be taken at any stage but because of its difficulty is regarded as a third year subject”)

A cohort of students (i.e.; “Most of the year did well, but there were a few notable failures)

There are other potential meanings. For this reason, the word, Year has been used sparingly in the thesis, and where possible (other than in quotes from informants) alternative descriptors have been used.